



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

Social media and online activities have become an integral component to everyone's overall marketing efforts. If you want to learn more about this vital marketing tactic, AOT is offering the Arizona Tourism University (ATU) workshop series, ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses***.

Please read below in the ***AOT News*** section for more information.

Also, don't miss the new research updates in the ***AOT News*** section below. Statewide Lodging Performance data for 3rd Quarter is in and looks fantastic!

Have a great week,

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Learn How to Optimize your Social Media Presence at AOT's Next Arizona Tourism Workshop!

AOT is proud to present the Arizona Tourism University (ATU) workshop series, ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses***.

Whether you have just started or you've been working with various social media platforms for awhile, the ATU workshop ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses***, offers insider information on how to optimize your social media's performance and become more strategic in your efforts to get the most out of social media.

Based on social media work with the City of Palm Desert, Arizona Highways Magazine and the Arizona Office of Tourism, the ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses*** presentation is tailored to the tourism industry and will help you gain an understanding of how to approach social media strategically.

In this workshop, Off Madison Ave will cover the basics of the top platforms – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs – and how you can utilize each one in a way that will help you reach key business objectives.

Register now for any one of the available ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses*** workshops below!

November 30

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Prescott College Art Gallery at Sam Hill Warehouse](#)

232 North Granite Street

Prescott, AZ 86301

December 7

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

[Cochise College - Benson](#)

1025 State Route 90

Benson, AZ 85602

December 9

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Webinar](#)

To register, visit: <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/641509616>

New Update to AOT's Research Web site!

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [County Lodging Q3 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging Q3 2011](#)
- [State Park Visitation September 2011](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

Don't Miss AOT's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon Co-op Opportunity

AOT is offering booth space at the P.F Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon and 1/2 Marathon EXPO January 13-14, 2012. Space is available to those DMOs promoting a local race in 2012. Partners should provide collateral for distribution at the race EXPO and staff to work the EXPO for time slots allotted. Price per participant is \$750, and space is limited to three (3) slots. RSVP to Rebekah Bell at rbell@azot.gov by 5:00 p.m. MST on November 14, 2011.

Upcoming Events & Activities

New York Media Marketplace

Date: November 15

Location: New York City, NY

Toronto Media Marketplace

Date: November 16

Location: Toronto, ON

Mexico Mission

Date: November 28 – December 2

Location: Mexico City and Guadalajara, Mexico

Industry News

New Initiatives from Global Sustainable Tourism Council

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council announced the launch of two initiatives this week that reflect the organization's efforts of the past two years: The GSTC Process and Destination Level Criteria Development.

The GSTC Process for recognizing and rewarding genuine practitioners of sustainable tourism is defined in three stages: GSTC-Recognized, GSTC-Approved and GSTC-Accredited. In the initial stage, sustainable tourism standards apply to become GSTC-Recognized. Once recognized, these standards are considered equivalent to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are the worldwide minimum requirements for tourism businesses of all size to approach sustainability.

In stage 2, certification programs apply to become GSTC-Approved to ensure that they meet GSTC requirements for processes and procedures. To apply, certification programs must use a GSTC-Recognized standard (Stage 1), pass a desk-audit by the GSTC technical team and receive final authorization from the GSTC Accreditation Panel. The final stage (Stage 3) is full GSTC Accreditation. GSTC-Accredited status is the most stringent and rigorous of the three stages.

Certification programs that achieve GSTC-Approved status can use the GSTC-Approved seal as well as offer pass-through rights to their certified businesses. For more information on the three stages of the GSTC Process please visit the website: <http://www.gstcouncil.org>.

“The three-stage GSTC Process is the result of hundreds of hours of work by travel, tourism, certification and accreditation experts from around the globe. The process is designed to have a harmonizing effect on the world of sustainable travel and tourism certification programs with the aim of building credibility and confidence among consumers,” explained Amos Bien, Technical Director, Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

The GSTC Council has also announced the creation of destination level baseline sustainable tourism criteria and indicators to enable good destination stewardship by the travel and tourism industry. The Destination Level GSTC Criteria (DL ^ GSTC Criteria) will be widely available for adoption in early 2012. To accelerate the development process, the GSTC will launch the first of two, 60-day public comment periods in parallel with the Early Adopters program. Destinations committed to sustainability are invited to submit an application to become an Early Adopter by November 23, 2011 and selected destinations will be notified by December 2, 2011.

The Early Adopters program will provide valuable input into the final version of the DL-GSTC Criteria. The invitation is open to destinations of all types and sizes. Applicants may include governments, public lands agencies (e.g., national parks), tourism bureaus, or other destination management organizations, on behalf of the destination.

The Early Adopters invitation can be accessed through the GSTC website site, <http://www.gstcouncil.org> or downloaded directly here. The application can be downloaded here.

The Destination Level GSTC Criteria, which complement the existing GSTC Criteria for hotel and tour operators, was developed incorporating the most widely accepted sustainable tourism certification standards for destinations, including UNWTO indicators, Global Reporting Initiative, Blue Flag, Earth Check, Green Globe, National Geographic, and others. The criteria will enable good destination stewardship by the tourism industry. “Several months ago we surveyed our membership and other stakeholders to ask what they thought the GSTC Council should focus on. We heard loud and clear that destination level criteria would make the largest positive impact. We are pleased that our GSTC Destinations Working Group was able to deliver such a quality program in record time,” said Erika Harms, Executive Director, Global Sustainable Tourism Council. (*Travel Industry Wire, November 7*)

U.S. Travel Industry Urges Improved Efficiency at Nation’s Airports

In testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Roger Dow addressed the economic damage inflicted by the current inefficiencies in the passenger screening process.

“For the travel community – which supports rural and urban communities alike – inefficiencies in the aviation security screening process impose a staggering cost on the economy, hampering job creation and economic growth,” said Dow. “And the data suggests that the problem is getting worse.”

Additionally, Dow addressed reforms that should be made to the aviation system to stimulate the economy; improvements for the TSA's recently created trusted traveler program, PreCheck; reconstitution of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee; and steps to decrease the number of carry-on bags.

"Congress and TSA must find ways to encourage fewer carry-on bags," said Dow. "The recent trend of most airlines charging separate fees for every checked bag has resulted in airline passengers 'carrying on' substantially more baggage per person. The increase volume of carryon baggage is causing significant checkpoint congestion, negatively impacting security, and causing significant strains on TSA personnel and resources."

Dow's complete testimony is [available here](#). (*Travel Industry Wire, November 2*)

Deloitte Annual Holiday Survey: Down Economy? 'Bah Humbug!'

While two-thirds (67 percent) of consumers expect the economy to stay the same or weaken next year, nearly three out of five (59 percent) will put aside economic worries and spend the same or more this holiday season. This is a slight decline from 2010 but an eight percentage point increase from 2009.

Shoppers planning to spend less this year (42 percent) point to higher costs impacting their household budgets. Six out of 10 cite higher food prices (63 percent) and higher gas prices (60 percent) as reasons for spending less this year. Roughly half (49 percent) point to higher energy costs.

"Lackluster employment growth, debt crises and stock market fluctuations have battered consumer confidence while inflation left many with lighter wallets this fall," said Alison Paul, vice chairman and U.S. retail & distribution leader, Deloitte LLP. "Consumers will be conservative this holiday season, but remain resilient and maintain a more positive interest in holiday shopping than we witnessed during the recession."

High-income shoppers sustain gift spending; gift cards and cash lose ground

With high prices leaving less in the household budget for other things, many consumers are re-evaluating gift-giving this year. Holiday shoppers plan to buy an average of 14.7 holiday gifts this year, down from 16.8 last year and continuing a four-year decline in the number of gifts they plan to purchase.

Higher-income households' gift spending will hold up while middle- and lower-income groups are paring back. Households earning \$100,000 or more annually expect to trim a mere 2 percent off gift spending to shell out an average of \$812 on gifts this holiday season compared with a 26 percent drop to \$291 on gifts among those earning less than \$100,000.

Despite smaller budgets, consumers may make the gifts more personal as more shoppers skip gift cards and cash this year. Consumers planning to purchase gift cards (45 percent) fell 11 percentage points to unseat this category's seven-year reign at No.1 and elevate clothing (48 percent) to the top spot. The number who plan to hand out cash slid 7 percentage points to just one-quarter (25 percent) of respondents.

The internet reigns as the savvy shopper's power tool

Deal-seekers are increasingly using online channels to get the most value. Nearly seven out of 10 (68 percent) of consumers plan to change the way they shop to save money, and more than half in this group (51 percent) will head online to find better prices. This represents a 10 percentage point jump from last year, while 46 percent plan to buy more items that qualify for free shipping.

Among shopping destinations, the Internet jumped 13 percentage points to join discount stores at the top of the list with nearly half (48 percent) of consumers planning to shop these two destinations for holiday gifts. While online interest climbed, discounters slid 10 percentage points from the 2010 survey.

A new holiday shopping tradition: Smartphones and social networks

Many consumers will take out their phones before their wallets this holiday season with even more visiting social media sites before tackling their gift lists.

More than one-quarter (27 percent) of smartphone owners plan to use their devices for holiday shopping to search for store locations (67 percent), compare prices (59 percent) and check product availability (46 percent). Additionally, 44 percent say they plan to use social media to seek discounts, read reviews and check family and friends' gift lists.

"Consumers are using online and mobile platforms to make the most of their holiday budgets, and the survey indicates that they will do more than just compare prices," said Paul. "Retailers that use mobile and online channels to show product availability, locations and pricing but add customized promotions and gift ideas may encourage shoppers to come in the door for a specific gift and take additional items to the register."

Consumers size up the deals early, but won't skip the holiday rush

More than half of consumers (53 percent) plan to begin shopping before Thanksgiving, but nearly three quarters (73 percent) intend to hold out until after this holiday to make the majority of their purchases.

Gen Y consumers are most likely to embrace the Black Friday tradition as more than four out of 10 (42 percent) 18-24 year old respondents plan to shop that day compared to an average of 24 percent among those age 25 and older. Nearly the same amount (37 percent) intend to partake in Cyber Monday shopping, compared with just 20 percent among those in older age groups.

For more information about Deloitte's Annual Holiday Survey, including additional statistics, historical data and useful links, please visit <http://www.deloitte.com/us/2011HolidaySurvey>.
(Travel Industry Wire, November 2)

Egencia Releases 2012 Forecast for Business Travel

Egencia®, an Expedia, Inc. company, today unveiled its 2012 Corporate Travel Forecast and Hotel Negotiability Index, finding that airline average ticket prices (ATPs) and hotel average daily rates (ADRs) for top corporate travel destinations will be slightly up overall in Europe, North

America and Asia-Pacific. After a year of decreased negotiability in 2011, Egencia's Hotel Negotiability Index suggests that corporations will continue to face a weak to moderate negotiating environment in 2012. Additionally, Egencia surveyed more than 250 travel buyers in Europe and North America regarding cost control measures, travel spend, technology trends and overall expectations for 2012.

Based on Egencia's 2012 Global Corporate Travel Forecast, ATPs overall for business travelers to top business travel destinations are expected to be:

- Slightly up (4%) for European points-of-sale
- Slightly up (4%) for North American points-of-sale
- Slightly to moderately up (6%) for Asia-Pacific points-of-sale

The hotel environment continues to show signs of year-on-year growth relative to increased corporate demand, resulting in improved hotel occupancy worldwide. In key destinations for 2012, Egencia forecasts average daily rate increases in:

- Europe (up 2%)
- North America (up 5%)
- Asia-Pacific (up 7%)

"As of today, we haven't seen business travel slowing down for our clients. During these uncertain economic times, companies remain cautious but, so far, haven't shown willingness to reduce overall travel spend. That being said, they are ready to take action if needed," said Christophe Peymirat, Vice President, Global Marketing, Egencia. "The objective of our annual forecast is to provide companies with insights that can be leveraged to positively influence their 2012 planning and negotiations. So they can effectively save in the coming year."

You'll find below the Europe Outlook including ATPs, ADRs, Advance Purchase Advisory, Hotel Negotiability, Travel Management Trends, in terms of top strategies for maintaining or controlling travel costs, mobile, social media and traveler duty of care.

For full study: https://www.egencia.co.uk/public/uk/en/promotion/landing-forecasts-2012/?Campaign_ID=701200000004JGo (*Travel Industry Wire, November 1*)

U.S. Travel Reports Travel Industry Employment Grows in October

David Huether, senior vice president of economics and research at the U.S. Travel Association, said travel employment in the U.S. actually grew in October, bucking the trend of the rest of the economy. "Following an upwardly revised addition of 158,999 jobs in September, overall employment growth slowed to just 80,000 in October while the unemployment rate remained essentially unchanged at 9 percent," Huether said.

After edging down by 3,900 in September, the travel industry bucked the trend and added 11,000 jobs last month, according to Huether. This accounted for more than one in eight of the total jobs created last month and was the biggest increase since June. Since the employment recovery began in March of last year, the travel industry has created 209,000 jobs and has increased 1.7 times faster than the rest of the economy.

At the same time Huether said the pace of job growth in both the travel industry as well as the economy overall has decelerated during the past four months compared to the first half of the year. "With the housing sector still in the doldrums, it is important for policy makers to look to alternative measures to help the fragile economy," he said. "One of the most efficient and least-costly efforts that would have the biggest bang for the buck would be to improve our nation's burdensome visa process, which would help boost international visitation, domestic spending, and job creation in the United States."

Over the past decade, Huether noted, the U.S. has lost a considerable amount of market share in international visitation to our global competitors, and simply recovering that lost share would increase employment in the United States by 467,000, which is roughly equal to the total number of jobs created in the U.S. since June. U.S. Travel has been engaged in an active campaign to improve the U.S. visa process from such potentially strong inbound markets as Brazil, Russia, India and China. Current rules mandate that travelers from these countries have personal interviews with a U.S. representative before being allowed to travel to this country, a burdensome regulation that U.S. Travel says is impacting visitation. (*Travel Pulse, November 5*)

US Airways adds Phoenix Route to LaGuardia

US Airways Group Inc. will add a direct route to New York's LaGuardia International Airport from the carrier's Phoenix hub. The Tempe-based airline is also adding service from Salt Lake City to Charlotte Douglas International Airport. The Phoenix-LaGuardia daily service begins March 10, and the daily service to Salt Lake City from Charlotte Douglas, US Airways' largest hub, begins March 4.

"We are pleased to offer our customers nonstop flights from New York's LaGuardia Airport to Phoenix with the Saturday-only exception to the LaGuardia perimeter rule," says Howard Kass, US Airways' vice president of legal and government affairs. "Customers in the New York area now have yet another opportunity to explore the West with convenient connections to more than 28 destinations."

Adds Andrew Nocella, US Airways' senior vice president of marketing and planning: "We're now providing our customers in the West easy connections to destinations in the East, and the Caribbean, from our Charlotte hub. We're also happy to offer our customers in the East a chance to explore Salt Lake City."

The US Airways (NYSE:LCC) Phoenix-LaGuardia route will operate with 124-seat Airbus A319 aircraft. The Charlotte-Salt Lake City flights will use 150-seat Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline says. (*Phoenix Business Journal, November 7*)

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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